

Vicksburg National Military Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Vicksburg National Military Park



Guardians of Our Nation's Past



Most furnishings are original period pieces; replicas include the Confederate litter, surgical kit, and soldier's jacket. The surgical kit, made by Gemrig of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is typical of those used by surgeons of both armies. Vicksburg's homes often served as hospitals for sick and wounded Confederate soldiers.



All furnishings are original pieces of the Civil War era, and are typical of household articles brought into the caves during the siege. This rocking chair was used in one of the Vicksburg caves.

Archives and Artifacts of the Park

The mission of the National Park Service is dedicated to preserving and protecting the Nation's natural and cultural resources for the enjoyment and education of current and future generations. Vicksburg National Military Park is just one unit of over 380 parks established by Congress to serve this mission.

"Art Park" of the World



Set aside to commemorate the Vicksburg Campaign and subsequent 47-day siege, Vicksburg National Military Park has a uniqueness that sets it apart from other park service areas. Historians and military personnel have come from all over the world to study the layout of the battlefield because of its pivotal importance in the final outcome of the Civil War. The sculpture found within the park is unique to Vicksburg, leading to the designation of Vicksburg National Military Park as the "Art Park" of the world.

At Vicksburg, the cultural resources encompass two different artifact collections. The Park Collection consists of those items dealing directly with the battlefield, such as original letters, diaries, cemetery ledgers, parole records, books donated by Veterans of the Vicksburg Campaign and their descendants, and artifacts recovered from the area of the battlefield. Remnants of shot and shell, fragments of firearms, and cooking utensils used on the battlefield, are all items exhibited at the Park's Visitor Center.

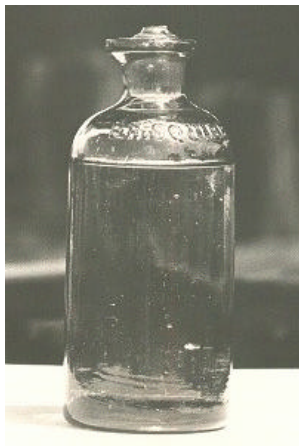


Life behind the Confederate lines was a far cry from the comfort experienced by the Union soldier whose duties were light with plenty of relief time for reading hometown newspapers, mail and pilfered books. Food was plentiful, though sometimes monotonous. Even so, there was a war going on and one Yankee soldier wrote, "Everywhere I went I was met with the familiar zip, zip of rebel bullets flying promiscuously through the air."



Shot and shell fired into the city.

USS Cairo Gunboat and Museum



This Squibb Pharmaceutical bottle was one of many bottles found still with original contents when the *USS CAIRO* was raised.

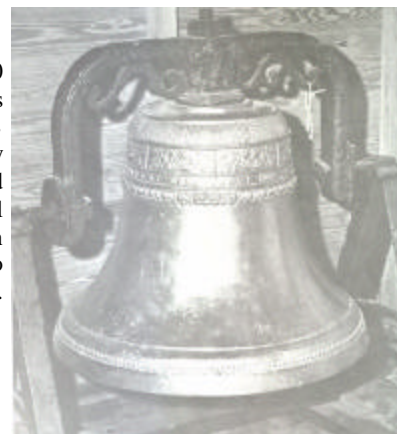
The second collection is the *CAIRO* Collection consisting of artifacts recovered from the *USS CAIRO*, a Union ironclad gunboat in service on the lower Mississippi River and sunk in the Yazoo River five months before the siege. The *USS CAIRO* is a significant cultural resource for the Vicksburg National Military Park. She was the first armed vessel to be sunk by an electrically-detonated mine, with her vast store of



A restored watch, dominoes, bugle mouthpiece and compass are among artifacts exhibited inside the *USS CAIRO* Museum.

artifacts found in time-capsule form exactly 102 years to the date of her sinking on December 12, 1862. Items recovered include medicine bottles, and medical equipment, cookware, pottery, weaponry and sailors' personal possessions including shaving gear, soap, tobacco, shoes, shoe polish, toothbrushes, hairbrushes, and recreational items such as fifes, dominoes, and scrimshaw.

Weighing over 400 pounds, this bronze bell was manufactured by G.W. Coffin and Co., Buckeye Bell Foundry in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1860.



We are Guardians of Our Nation's Past



Shoulder weapons were for the most part Army muskets, but at least a few shotguns were among the weapons aboard the *USS Cairo*.

As guardians of the past, park personnel are charged with the sometimes daunting task of caring for these unique items. A large mixture of materials forms the Vicksburg National Military Park artifact collection, consisting of items made of wood, metal, paper, glass, ceramic, bone, leather, brass and iron.

Each material represented must be cared for in a certain way, using different tools. Specialized instrumentation is placed throughout the museum in order that museum personnel can accurately monitor the environment. Temperature, humidity, and light levels kept at controlled levels. All play a key part in the preservation of these artifacts.

Museum personnel are also watchful for prohibited items (food, drink, pets, plants, etc.) being carried into the museum environment. Allowing any of the

artifacts to be exposed to these items could cause considerable damage to the collections. Any such items are required to remain outside the buildings.

Much thought and planning goes into the development of each exhibit, setting the mood and telling the stories and roles played by these artifacts during the campaign and siege. Most importantly, the exhibits are designed so they may be displayed in a manner which continues to preserve and protect these precious resources.

Everyone can take part in the continuous preservation efforts of the natural and cultural resources within the Nation's National Parks by obeying park rules and regulations. Remember, what we protect today will educate tomorrow's generations about the past for years to come.



The sailors ate their meals in messes of about 15 men. Each mess had one of these special chests to hold the sailors' tin plates, cups, spoons, glass condiment bottles, scrub brushes, a washtub and an earthenware jug of molasses.



Many pairs of leg and wrist irons were found aboard the *USS CAIRO*. Lt. Commander Selfridge was said to have been a strict disciplinarian and used these on his own crew as well as on prisoners.